The Progressive Review

Nbr 332
February 1995

Saving affirmative action

When talking about affirmative action it is important to keep in mind which version of affirmative action we are addressing. There are a number of affirmative action programs within the government, such as those for women and minorities, those for small business (through the SBA), those for defense contractors (through the Pentagon), those for veterans (through veterans programs) those for homeowners (through mortgage interest deductions) and so forth.

If, however, one limits the topic to the controversial forms of affirmative action, that is to say those benefiting minorities and women, we are then left with the question of whether we are really arguing about goals or about the route taken to reach them. For example, conservatives have offered a detailed critique of what is wrong with the processes of affirmative action, but have shown little inclination to improve upon them. This leads one to the suspicion that their concern is more with the results of affirmation action than its methods.

These, of course, are the same people who believe -- as the Peace & Freedom Foundation recently put it so elegantly -- that "He that does not work, neither shall he eat," which presumably would mean, say, replacing the 6% unemployment rate with a 6% starvation rate. To take advice from such individuals is a little like getting directions to Wall Street from someone who really wishes you would go back to Watts.

On the other hand, liberal supporters of affirmative action have badly mingled goals and methodology, granting to mere tactics the sanctity of principles and investing boiler-plate legalisms with the virtue of basic rights.

In fact, affirmative action has been ineffective in many ways. It has failed inner city residents. It has favored middle-class women over poorer ones. Its effects on minority participation on college campuses peaked some years ago. It has been abused and manipulated by unneedy members of minorities and by white business firms. And, like other aspects of liberal politics and race relations, it has been preempted by lawyers whose policies too often lead to the courthouse rather than to resolution. Affirmative action needs to be restudied and reframed by its friends before it is destroyed by its enemies. For starters, here are some ways its goals, rather than merely its chosen tactics, might be furthered:

- **Tell people who's really taking their jobs:** As with the anti-immigration hysteria, the attack on affirmative action is fed by real fears caused by job loss. In fact, neither minority hiring nor immigration is a major factor in this job loss. The real cause is white guys. The white guys who run multinational corporations that have taken jobs overseas. The white guys who came up with GATT and NAFTA. The white guys who are downsizing Fortunate 500 companies. The white guys who are automating. And the white economists who say that high unemployment is necessary for the health of the country and so you folks out there will just have to decide among yourselves who's going to suffer it.

Absent a politics that clearly identifies the real sources of economic pain -- the stateless corporation, automation, the corporatist policies of both parties, and the legal emigration of business rather than the illegal immigration of persons -- many will continue to place the blame on other victims rather than where it belongs. The Democratic Party -- even its liberal wing -- has been unwilling to do this. They would be criticizing too many of their contributors.

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The Progressive Review
Bucking the system since 1966

The Progressive Review is published 10 times a year. Formerly the DC Gazette. One year subscription: $17. Two year subscription: $31. Single copies: $2.00. The Review uses Pacific News Service and monitors Peacenet.

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ISSN 0889-2202

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- **Include affirmative action by zip-code, census tract, economic status or some other way that adds the factor of class to those of race and gender**. Every really successful social program in this country has either been universal or strongly cross-cultural -- including needy whites. Failing to follow this basic rule of American politics has hurt affirmative action badly.
- **Settle more cases by mediation.** Affirmative action, like other ethnic and gender issues, begs for dispute resolution rather than litigation. Unfortunately, the rules have been drawn up by litigators and not by peacemakers.
- **Give protection to those hurt by affirmative action.** Part of the political problem of affirmative action has been the insensitivity of its supporters to the pain it has caused in specific instances. One way to mitigate this is to provide protection for an employee who loses out in order to make room for someone else. For example, imagine a white police sergeant who qualifies for lieutenant but is not chosen in the interest of better integration at headquarters. That sergeant should automatically go to the top of the list for the next hiring round. He has already done his part for affirmative action.
- **Provide incentives rather than just regulations**. For example, firms that lead the pack in improving their hiring practices or in overall diversity of employment could be given a federal seal they could use in advertising. Such an icon could have increasing value as minority markets expand.
- **Provide wiggle room, especially for smaller businesses.** A big problem for small businesses is that government regulations are too complex and unforgiving. What if we offered these smaller firms some leeway in how they help America become a better place? For example, what if, for such businesses, we lumped affirmative action, energy conservation and recycling together in such a way that a laggard in minority hiring could partially compensate by excelling in reduced energy use or vice versa? Such a program would be based on the principle that while we all have our faults, we all can do something right as well.
- **Take on the discrimination we've been ducking:** The two big areas are housing and transportation. We have failed to confront these forms of discrimination, preferring to deal only with their results -- often ineffectively -- through such means as school bussing and affirmative action. We would not need to rely so much on affirmative action if we finally faced these issues.
- **Shorten the work-week and move towards full employment.** Nothing would so ease the tensions surrounding affirmative action as jobs for everyone. As long as we fail at this, there are going to be too many people wanting too few jobs. Someone is going to lose. And be mad about it. -- *Sam Smith*

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Today's Agenda

7:30 am	Breakfast with Alvin Toffler
8:30 am	Benediction from Anita Bryant
8:45 am	School prayer amendment
9:00 am	Property owners bill of rights
9:30 am	Forced internment of homosexuals
10:15 am	Repeal of 1993 budget reconciliation
10:30 am	Quality time for members and their families
10:45 am	Repeal of family leave
11:00 am	Mass grandfathering of all members from any future term limits bill
11:15 am	Term limits bill
12 Noon	Lunch seminar: *Brown People -- Who Are They?* Cannon L125
12:45 pm	Skeet shooting on the south lawn
1:15 pm	Mandatory supermajority for tax increases
1:30 pm	Mandatory supermajority to call the roll
2: 00 pm	Group viewing, *Ozzie and Harriet,* Nickelodeon, Longworth 1100
2:30 pm	Ceremonial launching, Orphanage Trust Fund
3:00 pm	Hymn singing with Billy Graham
3:15 pm	Repeal of 1964 Civil Rights Act
3:30 pm	Repeal of Voting Rights Act
3:45 pm	Flags distributed for Patriotism Hour
4:00 pm	Elimination of Departments of Education, Transportation, Housing & Urban Development, Energy, Health & Human Services, Commerce, Interior, Labor, Treasury, Defense and State
4:30 pm	Handgun cleaning, Dirksen 608
5:10 pm	Repeal of Medicare
5: 20 pm	Repeal of Mediaid
5:30 pm	Repeal of Taxation
6:00 pm	Workshop: *Determining Ethnicity by Surname & Skull Shape,* Russell 485
6:30 pm	Public caning of small children, Hart 126, free
7:00 pm	Vespers

-- *Will Heyniger*

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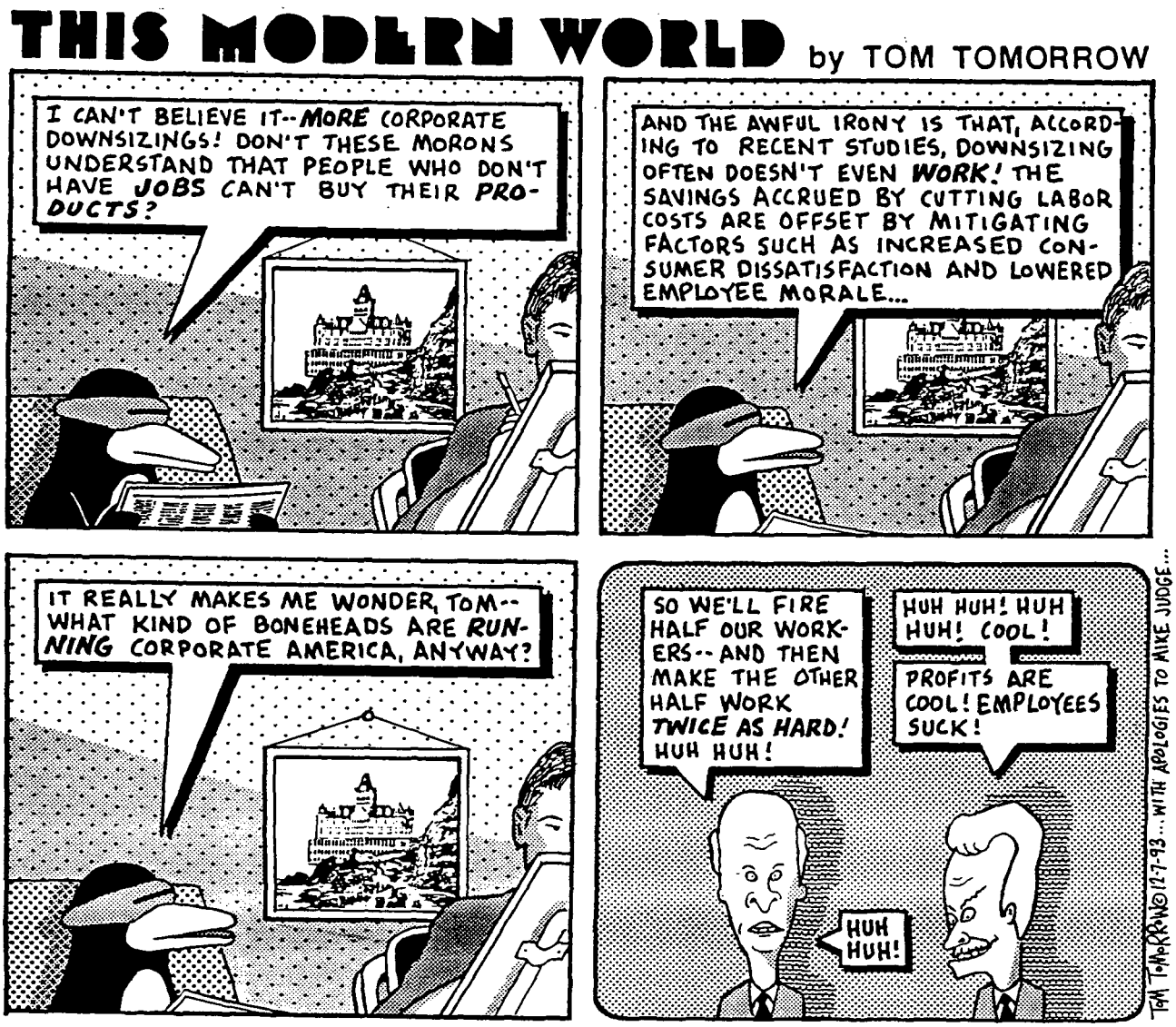
THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT--MORE CORPORATE DOWNSIZINGS! DON'T THESE MORONS UNDERSTAND THAT PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE JOBS CAN'T BUY THEIR PRODUCTS?
AND THE AWFUL IRONY IS THAT, ACCORDING TO RECENT STUDIES, DOWNSIZING OFTEN DOESN'T EVEN WORK! THE SAVINGS ACCRUED BY CUTTING LABOR COSTS ARE OFFSET BY MITIGATING FACTORS SUCH AS INCREASED CONSUMER DISSATISFACTION AND LOWERED EMPLOYEE MORALE...
IT REALLY MAKES ME WONDER, TOM-- WHAT KIND OF BONEHEADS ARE RUNNING CORPORATE AMERICA, ANYWAY?
SO WE'LL FIRE HALF OUR WORKERS-- AND THEN MAKE THE OTHER HALF WORK TWICE AS HARD! HUH HUH!
HUH HUH! HUH HUH! COOL!
PROFITS ARE COOL! EMPLOYEES SUCK!
HUH HUH!
TOM TOMORROW 12-7-93 ...WITH APOLOGIES TO MIKE JUDGE...

The Weather Report

Generation $

What's happening to Washington and America is not just a political phenomenon, but a cultural and pathological one as well. The primary interests of those running the country today are money, power and themselves. Whatever it is that they are supposed to be doing is of tertiary concern. Charlie Peters of the *Washington Monthly* calls them "spoiled yuppies" and Paul Tsongas notes that they are of a generation that has neither "suffered nor endured." Herb White, the perceptive DC restaurateur, says they were "trained to be aggressive, acquisitive, passively destructive and to consume without criticism." They are, in short, Generation $ -- the most ill-prepared, ill-mannered and misguided leadership this country has known since the 1920s.

In politics, this has led to some remarkable events. Like the president turning the State of the Union address into an hour and twenty minute infomercial -- lacking only a 800 number on his chest. One expected Tony Little to jump out at any moment and start teaching the legislators the right way to do abdominal crunches. This excruciating act of self-indulgence was followed by Governor Whitman turning the response to the State of the Union into a cliché-battered campaign brag about her first months in office. Like many of her peers (including the president), Governor Whitman thinks of words primarily as a marketing device.

As for the Getrich Gang, its core value system is nicely illustrated by a rare social proposal from the Lord of the Lies himself. Newt suggests a program under which children are paid to read books. Here is the essence of the Gingrichian attack on American culture, public works, education and social institutions -- namely that the one

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thing that matters is money. Money, in fact, is about the only topic of discussion in Washington these days. Everything else is judged by it. Even, it turns out, our souls.

The color green

Another sign of the capital's current obsession with money is its emphasis on whether federal intrusion on the powers of states is funded or not. No one seems to care whether the matter under discussion is actually within federal or state purview.

For example, the motor voting law was a clear example of appropriate federal action -- designed to protect the constitutional right of all citizens. The fact that it was "unfunded" in no way invalidates it. On the other hand, the federal government repeatedly intrudes into state affairs *with* funds. A typical example would be highway speed and drinking age limits, which were tied to road grants. These were funded, but still unconstitutional, mandates.

> The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people what they need to have done, but cannot do at all, or cannot do so well for themselves, in their separate or individual capacities. -- Abraham Lincoln.

Cooking the books?

The current fiscal hysteria stems in part from the claim that the Social Security trust fund is going to go broke, a claim uncritically accepted by the media and politicians. But, according to the *Left Business Observer*, it will only come true if the worst-case scenario for growth of gross domestic product occurs. The social security trustees have created three forecasts -- an official guess, an optimistic one and a pessimistic one. Writes *LBO*: "The official scenario assumes the economy will grow an average of 1.5% a year over the next 75 years -- half the rate seen in the last 75 years." Even during the 1930s the economy grew at a faster rate. The optimistic growth rate is only slightly better than that of the 1930s and the pessimistic one is so slow (0.7%) "as to guarantee a war of each against all." Concludes *LBO*, "Either the trustees are deliberately projecting slow growth to feed the pension-cutting mania, or they're expressing a deep pessimism about the US economy's future. Big news, whichever it is."

Northern debt

Like the United States, conservatives in Canada are pressing for austerity measures in order to ease the country's debt. But also like the US, Canada's debt is in part the result of the compounding of interest on the debt owed private institutions and individuals. In fact, one study found that since confederation in 1867, Canada has accumulated deficits of over $400 billion, but only 9% of this represents payment for actual goods and services. The rest is debt service. As an article in the *Watershed Sentinel* recently put it, "The cause of our debt is not social services, but compounding interest charges. . . It's time to stop the banks from making us pay dearly for our social programs." As in the US, the solution lies in borrowing reform, not debt reform.

The mediacracy

According to Jeffrey Frank in the *Washington Post*, *Time* magazine once called Gingrich "the china-and-crystal-smashing congressman from suburban Atlanta." Now the same publication describes him as having "a history professor's sense of occasion, a futurist's grasp of possibilities and a politician's dexterity with symbols."

From The Media Monopoly *by Ben Bagdikian, 1987:* "At the end of World War II. . . more than 80 percent of all daily newspapers in the United States were independently owned, but by 1986 the proportion was almost reversed: 72 percent were owned by outside corporations and fifteen of those corporations had most of the business. . . Today, despite 25,000 media outlets in the United States, twenty-nine corporations control most of the business in daily newspaper, magazines, television, books and motion pictures."

The *Washington Post*, which likes to sniff pompously at any hint of poor deportment elsewhere in the world of journalism, is happily promoting the sports arena scheme of its de facto non-profit subsidiary, the Federal City Council, with all the gusto of a third rate daily boosting some new real estate development. It turns out that the *Washington Times* also has a tad of a conflict of interest, what with a building near the proposed arena being owned by a spin-off of the Unification Church. Meanwhile, DC readers are being consistently misled and uninformed about the downside of the project. For example, both papers only belated admitted that the arena -- supposedly to be paid for by developer Abe Pollin -- will actually cost the taxpayer's money after all -- anywhere from $50 million to $70 million. That's enough to provide up to $2 million worth of recreation facilities in each of the city's neighborhood commission areas. Not only does the new accounting represent a one-third jump in overall costs, it appears largely due to the fact that the arena's boosters couldn't even fit the structure on their proposed site and so will have to buy more land. This big botch got no attention in either paper and the massive fiscal miscalculation has been buried as well. All this in a city with a half billion dollar deficit.

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The Post-Modern Dictionary

Contract: As in *Contract with America*. A press release.

Elitist: A liberal politician who believes the government should still provide social services.

Populist: a Ph.D. who comes from the richest district in Georgia, stands to make $7 million on his book, thinks everyone should take the plane instead of the train, believes viewers should pay cable companies for their educational programming rather than getting it free and who pals around with heads of telecommunications corporations generating $200 million annually in revenues.

Reform: As in *welfare reform*. Repeal.

Revolutionary: Loud and obnoxious

Rights and Responsibilities: A privilege conditioned on proper deportment. Replaces *unalienable rights*, now obsolete.

Understanding devolution

Often, the first casualty in journalism is history -- as when the media accepts the right-wing's false claim to the concept of devolution. In truth, devolution is neither right nor left wing. It does, however, have a strong progressive provenance (even without going back to Thomas Jefferson). In fact, the conservative columnist William Safire defined the term in a 1970s edition of his *Political Dictionary* in these words: "In a general sense, devolution is a synonym for 'power sharing,' a movement that grew popular in the sixties and seventies as charges of 'bureaucracy' were often leveled at centralized authority.'"

A classic example of devolution was the War on Poverty. In fact, one of the major complaints from politicians about the War on Poverty was that it gave too much power to communities and too little to politicians such as mayors. On the other hand, while Reagan talked about the return of government to a lower level he did little about it..

The problem with the right-wing's use of the word is that it tends to confuse the devolution of government with its dismantling. This sort of semantic misappropriation can give the word a bad name, especially as statist liberals fight a rear-guard action against meaningful and democratic devolution. It also confuses reporters stumbling across the concept for the first time. For example, Michael Kelly of the *New Yorker* recently expressed surprise that a Democratic president might be interested in devolution and "is now urgently competing against [Gingrich] in what amounts to a government disarmament race." That's not devolution, Michael. That's dissolution. Close, but two different words and ideas.

The best way to think about devolution is to remember that it refers to what *Review* writer Tom Martin has called "the ideology of scale." This ideology functions in a three-dimensional fashion with traditional ideologies. For example, one can be a progressive decentralist or a conservative who believes in centralized authority. Thus conservatives and progressives may agree that much power needs to be returned to a local level, but might disagree violently on how it should be handled once it gets there.

Just politics

In the November election, two nationally organized third parties gained over 30% of the vote in a statewide race. According to *Ballot Access News* this is the first time this has happened in the US since 1968, with its victories of George Wallace's American Party. This year in New Mexico, the Green candidate for state treasurer got 33% of the vote, while in Montana a Libertarian got 31% of the vote in a race for clerk of the supreme court.

Meanwhile, another sign of growing third party power: in three states bills have been introduced to attempt to restrict ballot access.

We don't like censorship even when the good guys are doing it. Besides, it rarely works, witness the fact that WABC's ratings have gone up since Jesse Jackson and other ministers started their boycott against the New York station's talk show host, Bob Grant. According to a recent Broadcasting, WABC earned a 3.9 rating in the summer survey, but 4.7 in the fall.

Here for future reference are a few of the things that the oft-maligned Jimmy Carter administration accomplished: helped to negotiate an end to 30 years of war between Egypt and Israel; the SALT II arms treaty (rejected by the Senate); the Panama Canal treaty, and negotiated the release of the 52 American hostages in Iran. Since leaving office Carter has helped negotiate accords in Haiti, North Korea and Bosnia.

The sudden dismissal of Christina Jeffrey as the House historian is another reminder that in a post-modern world one is judged not by the meaning of one's words but by their symbolic import at a particular moment. Whether justified or not, Jeffrey had to be ditched, and fast, because her words created a semiotic link between gingrichism and nazism. In a less politically charged atmosphere (say, a conference of historians) and from someone else's mouth,

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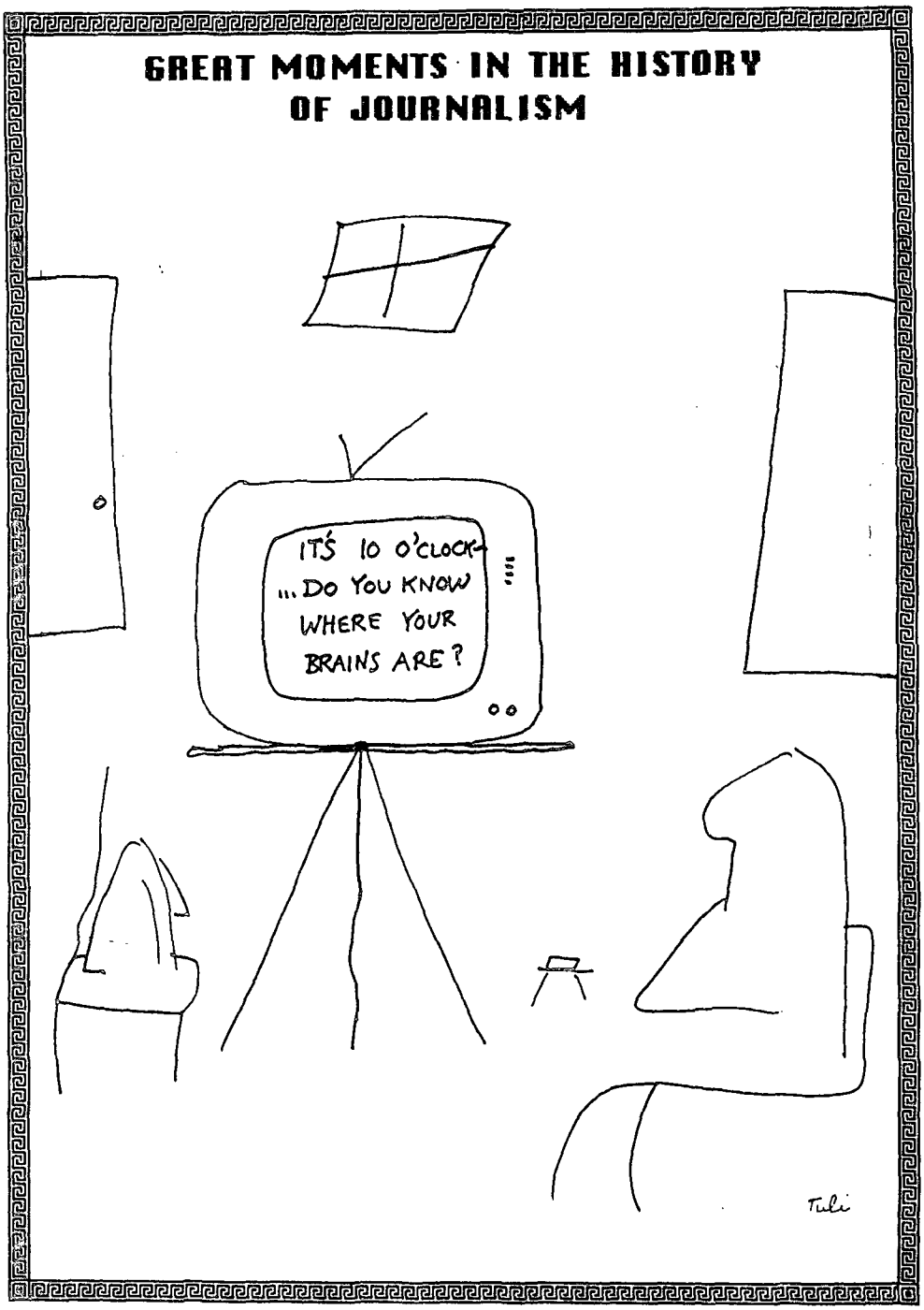

the idea that the views and words of Nazis should be studied might revolve calmly around the issue of the productive use of primary sources and around the question of how rather than whether. Presumably, for example, European history majors are still permitted (and occasionally encouraged) to read *Mein Kampf.*

Of course, there are dangers here. Imagine, for example, a course that had on its reading list both the work of early 20th century eugenicists and, say, *The Bell Curve.* Or one in which Nazi newspaper editorials and political speeches concerning Jews were compared to contemporary American newspaper editorials and political speeches on immigration.

But there is little danger of such a course appearing in most schools. We have simplified WWII and Nazism to the Holocaust much in the manner that body-count journalism reduces urban social turmoil to gruesome acts of violence. By concentrating heavily on the horrible results of Nazism we can avoid not only the Nazi point of view -- with whatever uncomfortable parallels we might find in it -- but the Nazi point of departure, the political context and the failed response of a weakened democracy to it. Yet it is only when our revulsion to Nazism's outcome is combined with a critical understanding of its genesis that we begin to have the tools to support our oft-stated desire that it never happen again.

The director of one of the country's major railroads in the 19th century made a useful and still pertinent division of members of Congress. He considered those who would vote his way without bribes as *clean.* Those who needed financial incentives were *commercial.* The ones who couldn't be bought and wouldn't vote right were *communists.*

One problem with turning over government programs to charities: According to *US News & World Report,* 30% of the funding for these charities comes from the government.

Alvin Toffler is a surfer riding a third wave of his own design. Richard Grenier of the *Washington Times* recently listed some of Toffler's concepts, a list that may

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The ABCs of Objectivity

Move to the right, which is the advice that somebody should have given him a long time ago -- *Cokie Roberts of ABC News, election night, on what advice she would have for Clinton.*

I started out by viewing the marketplace as a cruel place, where you need intervention by government and lawyers to protect people. But after watching the regulators work, I have come to believe that markets are magical and the best protectors of the consumer. It is my job to explain the beauties of the free market. -- John Stossel of ABC News quoted by EXTRA!

obviate one's desire to buy his books: technological womb, the vermilion pagoda, mechano-mania, the represento-kit, the margarine plantation, the de-massified society, the prosumer, the mental maelstrom, wholism and halfism, practopia,. the new psycho-sphere, and the configurative 'me.'

The media and people like Gingrich and Clinton have latched on to this stuff. In part this is because it clearly dumps them in with the elite. Some of these folk have even started referring to themselves as "brain lords" in the new information kingdom.

Alexander Cockburn points out in a recent issue of the *Nation* that we're basically talking about an "information economy" in which security trader George Soros earned $850 million in a year -- or more than the poorest 100,000 residents in the Bronx combined. We're talking about an economy that will greatly enrich those who are doing all the talking about it while the rest of the country declines.

Only occasionally, does a bit of unvarnished, unjargoned truth slip out from one of the brain lords of the new psycho-sphere -- such as the comment of Don Logan, president of *Time,* to a meeting of the Association of National Advertisers: "Stop thinking about it as the information highway and start thinking about it as the marketing superhighways. Doesn't it sound better already?" Those lights ahead aren't some more data coming down the road, folks; it's just another commercial.

The last issue of the *Review* mentions the discrepancy in the number of babies actually left in dumpsters in DC and the number claimed by Gingrich -- 4 vs. 800. Our figures came from *Time*. But according to Joel Achenbach in the *Washington Post*, Gingrich was even further off. Achenbach reports that only three babies nationwide were left in dumpsters in 1994 and none in Washington.

The corporate state

It turns out that the entitlements the press and both political parties have been talking so much about don't include those granted to the nation's financiers. The rush to rescue Wall Street's bad bets in Mexico was another example of current hypocrisy concerning government spending. For example, there are two major groups still exempted from federal austerity programs: defense contractors and bondholders. Under present rules, welfare mothers who make mistakes are excoriated and denied benefits, while financiers who do the same are rewarded by having the government assume their risk.

To compensate for this, Saul Landau on Pacifica Radio imagined Mayor Marion Barry of Washington DF (Distrito Federal) writing to Mexican president Zedillo to suggest that his country absorb the US capital so it would have an easier time getting a fiscal bailout.: "When the District of Columbia goes into debt, Congress gets mad at us and cuts us off. Even when a Republican stronghold, Orange County, went bankrupt, no one offered to help. But the peso gets into trouble, they offer you billions. By joining Mexico we figure we'll be worthy enough to be bailed out, too."

In fact, DC could be rescued with a loan guarantee about one percent the size proposed for Mexico and its Wall Street investors.

One of the clearest expositions of the Mexican situation came in an op-ed piece by George Washington University economics professor Robert Dunn. Dunn noted that the crisis was related to rising interest rates in the US. With their climb, said Dunn, "a lot of risky assets, inlcuding Mexican debt, became less attractive. Just as money goes into high-risk assets in periods of low interest rates, a tightening of moneetary policy always produces a 'flight to quality.' . . . Risky borrowers, like Mexico, started to have great difficulty in rolling over their debts.

Dunn concludes "We now have a wonderful recipe for prosperity on Wall Street: When risky assts pay, keep the money and compalin about high taxes. When such high-risk assets approach default, get the US Treasury to cover the losses.

Instead of the bailout scheme, Dunn propose lengthening the time period of the debt and getting loas from the International Monetary Fund.

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Richard Barnett in the December 19 *Nation* notes that the proportion of the unionized workforce in the US -- now less than 12% -- is smaller than it was in 1936 the year after passage of the New Deal's major labor reform act. He also quotes Stanford economist Paul Krugman as saying that between the 1970s and 1990s "the real wages of low-ranked workers like janitors fell 15 percent of more, while the real earnings of high-end occupations like doctors and corporate executives rose 50 percent or more. "

> I was asked the other day about United States competitiveness and I replied that I dont think about it at all. We at NCR think of ourselves as a globally competitive company that happens to be headquartered in the US. -- *Gilbert Williamson, President, NCR Corporation, 1989*

The idea mill

Those seeking a model for the community constables we have long advocated, might want to check out Houston TX which has a system of *elected* constables. One of these constables, Victor Trevino, has managed -- with the help of over 200 volunteer deputies -- to cut the crime rate 10%, arrest nearly 2000 wanted parole violators, slash the school truancy rate in half and bring back Little League after a 25-year absence. Trevino, the first latino immigrant elected in Harris County, works in an inner city community of 150,000 people. All his volunteers are fully trained and have the arrest powers of regular officers. *[Policy Review: Spring 1994]*

Drug busts

In yet another indication that the public is ahead of the politicians and media on drug issues, the Center for Substance Abuse Research reports that 59% of all Marylanders polled said they believe that individuals convicted for the first time of possessing drugs should be sent to treatment programs. A combination of both treatment and jail time was favored by 30% while jail only was supported by less than 5%. Marylanders also favored (84%) allowing physicians to prescribe marijuana to treat health conditions.

Another federal judge has said he will stop hearing drug cases rather than continue to be part of a system that "just isn't working." According to the *Buffalo News*, Judge John T. Curtin "feels Congress should take a close look at the decriminalization of marijuana, but not cocaine or other hard drugs." According to the National Organization for Marijuana Reform, Curtin joins some 50 senior federal judges in an unprecedented boycott of drug cases. Most of the judges cite excessive punishments required by mandatory reason.

Roadsigns

Drugs

Annual cost of incarcerating a heroin user with no treatment: $40,000. Annual cost of providing residential treatment for a heroin user: $16,500. Annual cost of effective methadone treatment for a heroin user: $3,500. *[National Institute on Drug Abuse]*

Economics

Minimum wage (in 1994 dollars) in 1956: $5.59. In 1979: $6.36. In 1994: $4.25 *[NYT]*

Politics

Percent of Americans who say the country is in excellent shape: 2%. Percent who say it is fair or poor shape: 68% *[Louis Harris poll 12/94]*

Cost of providing the poorest Americans with a laptop computer (as proposed by Newt Gingrich) at $1000 per computer: $40 billion *[Michael Kinsley in the New Yorker]*

Transportation

Number of rail lines required to carry the equivalent of 16 highway lanes: 1. Increase in Amtrak ridership 1982-93: 48% Percent of operating Amtrak operating costs covered by revenue in 1981: 54%. In 1991: 79% *[Trainriders/Northeast]*

Field Notes

Groups

The Center for Constitutional Rights has launched an education and organizing campaign around the theme, Break the Contract on America. Under the new leadership

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of Ron Daniels, the CCR will also provide litigation assistance to victims of Gingrich et al. *[212-614-6422]*

The Center for Voting and Democracy has released a state-by-state study of the 1994 elections in which it found that it took only 21% of eligible voters to elect a candidate to the House, in contrast with 75% of eligible voters to elect members of Germany's parliament in 1994, carried out under proportional representation. There are 190 incumbents in the House who won both the 1992 and 1994 elections by landslides. The average victory margin for all races was 34% in 1994, up from 30% in 1992. *[CVD: 202-882-7378]*

No bedfellows: In our on-line edition we quoted David Corn in the *Nation* as noting that among the supporters of the Gingrichian Peace & Freedom Foundation was *Wired Magazine*. We are informed that Corn's report was incorrect and that *Wired* simply provided some free copies for the cyber-conservatives' conference.

Copyrights: The Authors Guild reports that many publications are being put on-line (often at cost to subscribers) in violation of individual copyrights contained in these publications. Publishers are also trying to get authors to give up their electronic rights when signing new contracts. The National Writers Union has backed a lawsuit alleging that the New York Times and other publishers have put back issues on database services without having obtained rights from the authors.

Gatherings

Third Party Activists' Conference: Your editor has been asked to help convene a national conference on third party activism that will probably be held in June in the Washington area. The conference, being organized by members of the Green Politics Network, is designed to reach a spectrum of non-establishment activists with sessions on ballot access, campaign finance, legal strategies and media relations. Past and future independent presidential candidates will be invited to participate. It is expected that out of the conference will come a shared statement of principles signed by leaders of various third parties and independent political movements. *[To be advised of developments write us at 1739 Conn. Ave. NW WDC 20009, or reply by e-mail to ssmith@igc.org]*

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